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President: Mr. Kerim ..... (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Thematic debate entitled "Recognizing the achievements, addressing the challenges and getting back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015"

Agenda item 116 (*continued*)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Mrs. Diallo (Mali) (*spoke in French*): First of all, it is my pleasant duty to thank the President, on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, for organizing this thematic debate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). I also wish to express our thanks for the quality and relevance of the documents made available to us. Finally, I would like to thank the panellists for clarifications that they gave us yesterday morning on the status of the MDGs. I am thinking in particular of Mr. Paul Collier, whose work on landlocked developing countries held our attention completely.

Our Group fully subscribes to the statement made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. However, I would like to elaborate on some aspects that are of particular relevance to the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, unwilling to accept the extreme poverty in which millions of human beings live in a world of such tremendous potential, we have made a statement in which we have, inter alia, expressed our firm will to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in the number of those living in extreme poverty by the year 2015. That is with a view to making our world more worthy of its people by giving each inhabitant of the planet a better quality of life.

To achieve that goal, we have, during international meetings that followed, undertaken a number of important commitments. They include establishing a system of good governance, developing and implementing appropriate strategies for poverty reduction, granting to the poorest countries substantial assistance of up to 0.7 per cent of gross national product of developed countries, and technology transfer and infrastructure development for countries of the South.

So where do we stand, seven years after that declaration? Encouraging results have, of course, been achieved on a global scale in all areas, but unfortunately their extent varies according to the objectives, the regions and sometimes even within States.

For our Group, the Landlocked Developing Countries, the figures speak for themselves. With 12.5 per cent of the surface area of continents and 4 per cent of global population, we receive only 0.3 per cent of worldwide gross national product.

The average wealth accumulation per capita is clearly below that of other developing countries. For example, from 2003 to 2004, at the same time that per

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capita income grew by an average of almost 5 per cent in countries of the South, landlocked developing countries, given the cost of their isolation, registered only 3.7 per cent.

The toll exacted by our enclave status weighs heavily on our ability to achieve the MDGs in the States members of our Group.

With very low incomes, due to the fact that we derive almost no benefit from the advantages of globalization, we encounter tremendous difficulties in financing our development in general and programmes to achieve the MDGs in particular, specifically in health, education, fighting malnutrition, and fighting HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

While the objectives in those areas are almost achieved in the countries of the North, in 2006, in the majority of landlocked developing countries, about half of school-age children did not attend school. It is the same with regard to malnutrition. And to that we should add that more than two thirds of the population live on less than two dollars a day and that life expectancy barely exceeds 40 years.

All of this is to say that our Group deserves special attention from the international community, which should focus more on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, which aims at reducing the deleterious consequences of our enclave status. The midterm review of the Programme will take place on 2 and 3 October 2008. The review will be preceded by a preparatory phase that has already begun with two ministerial meetings, one on infrastructure and the other on commerce and the facilitation of trade, held in Ouagadougou and Ulan Bator, respectively. They pointed to mixed results in infrastructure and in the participation of landlocked developing countries in world trade. Those States are becoming more vulnerable due to the disturbing increase in oil prices, which because of the concomitant rise in transport costs is a heavy burden on their competitiveness. And to that we add the harmful effects of climate change, which increase the effects of isolation on the landlocked developing countries.

So I call for full and diligent implementation of the Almaty Programme, which will undoubtedly help speed up the achievement of the MDGs in our member States. I should like here to encourage the international community, in particular our development partners and our neighbours of transit, to support the programme review process.

I also launch an earnest appeal for strengthening the capacities of United Nations agencies and institutions involved in organizing the midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action, especially the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and the Small Island Developing States, which coordinates the organization of that review.

I cannot end, without thanking the President for his personal commitment to our Group, which we have seen, inter alia, in the appointment of a facilitator, namely, the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Japan, whom I deeply thank here today on behalf of our Group.

Mrs. 'Utoikamanu (Tonga): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Pacific Small Island Developing States (Pacific SIDS) namely Fiji, Nauru, Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and my own country, the Kingdom of Tonga.

At the outset, we wish to thank the President for convening this thematic debate entitled "Recognizing the achievements, addressing the challenges and getting back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015". We fully support his call for urgent action, as well as the emphasis provided by this debate, which offers a window of opportunity for the international community to redouble its efforts to achieve the Goals.

At midpoint between the historic Millennium Summit of 2000 where our world leaders endorsed the road map for a better world, to be gauged by the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, the Pacific SIDS have made some notable progress in specific areas towards achieving the MDGs. However, at current trends, most of the Pacific SIDS face challenges to achieving all of the MDGs by 2015. While we embrace primary responsibility for our development, it is also recognized that the Pacific SIDS face common constraints that make their economies more vulnerable, due to the very nature of their size, remoteness from markets, limited human resource capacity and vulnerability to natural catastrophes and the impact of climate change.

Those challenges are exacerbated where there is conflict and civil-political instability. Governance challenges, the impact of global externalities such as rising oil and food prices, domestic rural-urban migration and labour mobility have also limited the ability of the Pacific Governments to implement the necessary policy initiatives to realize significant MDG gains.

Our leaders recognized that these serious challenges require the pooling of scarce regional governance resources and the alignment of policies to strengthen national capacities. Regional integration and cooperation therefore play a vital role in supporting the Pacific SIDS. In 2005, our leaders endorsed the Pacific Plan, which reflects the region's priorities and which was subsequently reaffirmed in 2007 to be in line with and to support the implementation of international frameworks such as the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy of Implementation.

The Pacific Plan focuses on four overlapping pillars, including economic growth, sustainable development, good governance and security, with strategic frameworks that include increasing the levels of sustainable returns to the Pacific, ensuring the successful implementation of regional cooperation at the national level, meeting common responsibilities and providing services in a cost-effective manner, and developing partnerships with neighbours and beyond.

While globally the Asia-Pacific region leads the way on poverty reduction, with very high economic growth rates in some countries, the Pacific SIDS have not been as successful, with lower rates of economic growth and an indication of greater poverty. The Pacific SIDS are growing on average at about 3 per cent annually. Individual country performance, however, tends to be diverse and uneven. The average growth rate is insufficient to meet the requirements needed to balance competing national priorities with resource constraints and to enhance the effectiveness of often diminishing aid to produce better development outcomes.

Energy is a key driver of economic growth in the Pacific SIDS and the rising price of oil hampers the capital accumulation necessary to sustain the development process. It is therefore essential that affordable, clean and efficient energy is available to all through reliable, affordable energy services.

Available data suggest that, on average, one in four households in the Pacific experiences poverty and hardship, as measured by the national basic-needs poverty line. However, hunger is not a significant issue for many countries in the Pacific. Although malnutrition does exist, obesity and its consequent non-communicable diseases have become a growing challenge in most Pacific island countries.

There has been significant progress in access to educational opportunities for boys and girls and in gender parity in education, with relatively high primary school enrolment rates in all the countries in our Group, ranging from 100 per cent to 60.3 per cent. Those figures highlight that education is both recognized as a basic human right and seen as essential to underpin the future prosperity of the Pacific countries. At the same time, while enrolment rates may be high, there is a need to look at completion rates to ensure that the number of children out of school is reduced. There is a particular need in some Pacific countries to give more attention to ensuring that females are able to attend and complete their schooling.

There are more women present in the labour force than ever recorded previously. However, the share of women in the non-agricultural sectors is much less than that of men, and many women are likely to work in agriculture and often as unpaid family workers. Our leaders in 2007 endorsed the concept that work be undertaken to explore ways to enhance the participation particularly of women in decision-making processes and institutions, in particular the parliamentary process. The gender dimension, however, should also be addressed throughout all interventions, and not just on MDG 3, in order to improve gender equality, empower women and make resources available for appropriate interventions.

The rates of child and infant mortality, which are amongst the most important indicators of social development, are generally improving in Pacific small island developing States, although regional and subregional variations can be noted, requiring additional efforts and attention at the subnational level in those countries. Substantial progress has also been made in some countries on the immunization of 1-year olds against measles. Improvement is needed to extend coverage to all children in most countries.

The number of cases of tuberculosis is estimated to have increased since 1990. The reported HIV infection rate remains low for most Pacific small island developing States. Pacific Governments have, however, recognized the need to respond to that challenge head on, and consequently most Pacific small island developing States have a national multisectoral HIV/AIDS strategic plan in place. That is complemented by the regional HIV/AIDS strategy, which contributes to coordinated responses. Countries are addressing the need to undertake legislative reform and to put in place the appropriate legal framework to ensure that the rights of people living with HIV are respected. The challenge for Pacific small island developing States is to turn the policy and legal frameworks into reality through appropriate planning, costing and budgetary allocations.

The importance of environmental sustainability is recognized in all Pacific island countries through the integration of sustainable development into country policies and programmes. However, while it is accepted that managing the environment contributes to the achievement of other MDGs and is crucial for future generations, the translation of policies into action on the ground has been challenging for most Pacific island countries.

On reversing the loss of environmental resources, the Pacific presents a mixed picture, with rapid rates of deforestation occurring in some countries. Access to safe water, which is critical to reducing child mortality and to contributing to the achievement of other Goals, is relatively high in most Pacific island countries. However, sustainable access to improved water sources and sanitation needs improvement in rural and remote areas.

Advocating and supporting both policy and behavioural change in the areas of natural resource and environmental management, including mitigation and adaptation to climate change, has been identified by regional frameworks as key to reducing that long-term vulnerability and building more resilient Pacific small island developing States and communities. There is growing evidence that climate change is one of the most important threats to the social, economic and environmental development of Pacific island countries. That has the potential to have serious adverse consequences for socio-economic development, even to the extent of threatening the very existence of some States, particularly those that are predominantly atolls. That has serious implications for MDG achievement.

Increasing populations, unsustainable production and consumption patterns, dependence on such climate-sensitive industries as tourism, fisheries and agriculture, and the location of major infrastructure in coastal areas make Pacific island countries particularly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters. Support needs to be provided to the Pacific island countries to assess climate change risks and to develop and adopt strategies that contribute to sustainable development, sound environmental management and judicious resource use.

The challenges for the Pacific small island developing States to get back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015 are daunting, but not impossible with an increased level of the support of the international community to address the plethora of issues, including the need to accelerate economic growth rates to more sustainable levels, strengthening governance systems, addressing the HIV/AIDS pandemic more effectively, addressing education and health challenges and addressing vulnerabilities related to climate change and natural disasters, while also addressing cross-cutting issues such as gender equality and the empowerment of women. Addressing the special needs of small island developing States, including access to technology, affordable and available medicines, and jobs for their growing populations, particularly for young people, are important steps to reach the MDGs in the Pacific.

The Pacific small island developing States are of the view that serious consideration of the MDGs cannot be made without reference to financing for development, which includes the scaling up of the quality and quantity of official development assistance. It is also fully recognized that even when there is an increase in official development assistance, it has to be complemented by functional systems, institutions and processes so that improved aid effectiveness produces better and relevant development outcomes.

Mr. Ileka (Democratic Republic of the Congo): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the African Group. Our Group would like to associate itself with the statement made this morning by Ms. Joanne Massiah, Minister of Agriculture, Lands, Marine Resources and Agro Industry of Antigua and Barbuda, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The African Group wishes to express its appreciation to the President of the General Assembly for convening this debate and for the provision of the thematic background papers. African countries welcome the decision of the General Assembly to convene the high-level meeting on Africa's development needs on 22 September 2008.

We are also grateful to the Secretary-General for establishing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Africa Steering Group charged with the responsibility of ensuring that Africa meets the targets of the MDGs. Africa is looking forward to the high-level meeting on the MDGs that will take place on 25 September 2008.

In recalling the Millennium Declaration, we attach great importance to the intentions with regard to development, which state that

> "We will spare no effort to free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty, to which more than a billion of them are currently subjected. We are committed to making the right to development a reality for everyone and to freeing the entire human race from want." (*resolution 55/2, para. 11*)

However, It is disappointing to all of us that, midway between their adoption in 2000 and the target date of 2015 for achieving the MDGs, African countries — in particular in sub-Saharan Africa — are not on track to achieve any of the goals. Even the best governed countries on the continent have not been able to make sufficient progress in reducing extreme poverty in its many forms. Reaching the MDG target of halving the extent of extreme poverty by 2015 requires that the current pace be nearly doubled.

Yet time is running out for making the needed practical investments. Existing commitments made and reaffirmed by world leaders at the G8 summit at Gleneagles and the 2005 World Summit could be sufficient to meet the Goals, in particular when the efforts of the African countries at development are combined with adequate financial and technical support from the international community. At the midway point of 2008, those commitments must be urgently translated into practical plans with systematic follow-through.

Regarding education, African countries have a vision of an integrated, peaceful, prosperous Africa driven by its own people to take its rightful place in the global community and the knowledge economy. That vision is predicated upon the development of Africa's human resources. Education is the major means by which Africa's citizenry will be prepared for its key role in the attainment of that vision.

It is well known that the completion of MDG 2 — achieving universal primary education — is fundamental to the success of other poverty-reduction strategies. The background papers for this meeting also provide statistics and analyses that are so telling. The United Nations report informs us that Africa is making progress towards universal primary school enrolment but still has a long way to go. It is sad that girls and children from poorer or rural families are least likely to attend school. Furthermore, disabled children still miss out disproportionately on receiving any kind of education. It is estimated that around 26 million of the 77 million children currently out of school are disabled and thus make up a third of all those out of school. Such a disappointing situation can no longer be tolerated.

African countries, for their part, have made massive progress in the past 40 years in reducing the illiteracy gap. An evaluation in the background papers shows that between 1999 and 2005 the number of children entering primary education grew by 4 per cent, from 130 million to 135 million, with a jump of 36 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa. That is considered a major achievement.

In terms of net enrolment ratio (NER), sub-Saharan Africa registered a growth from 57 per cent to 70 per cent. That achievement is attributed to the focus of African Governments on the education sector and to support from cooperating partners. A challenge facing Africa is that more than one third of our countries have NER rates below 70 per cent.

Another great challenge is to ensure that children stay in school long enough to acquire basic competency. Comparatively, the median completion rate is lowest in Africa, standing at 63 per cent. A more holistic approach is needed to register genuine success on the MDG target on this front.

Africa realizes that education is essential for science learning, technology transfer and absorption, and capacity-building leading to increased self-reliance

in research and development. In that regard, the international community is called on to help realize this Goal.

HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria are still pervasive in Africa, and much has to be done in these areas if MDGs are to be achieved. Multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis has now become a serious concern. Although the infant mortality rate is going down due to public health interventions, Africa is fully concerned that the maternal mortality rate is still high, although there is an African Union road map for reducing it.

The well-being of children is at the heart of the MDGs, in particular MDGs 4 and 5. With this in mind, Africa has made children a priority. Over the years, the African heads of State and Government made a number of commitments to improve the well-being of the continent's children. They have also developed the Continental Policy Framework on Sexual and Reproductive Health in Africa, through a participatory process involving all the regions.

Reducing the maternal mortality rate is likely to remain complex and challenging due to limited access to and availability of information, services and care, and skilled birth attendants, and the weak health systems lacking adequate human resources. In order to improve reproductive and maternal health, access to quality family planning and to a whole range of sexual and reproductive health care is needed.

It is pleasing to note that the World Health Organization is responding positively to the concerns about human resource challenges that were highlighted by health ministers from Africa and the rest of the developing world at successive sessions of the World Health Assembly. As Africa continues with the strengthening of the education and training of prospective health professionals, it is disturbing to note, however, that the brain drain to developed countries is still very high.

Since it is clear that Africa is not on track to achieve the MDGs, it is the continent's hope that global partnership can be strengthened in order to be back on the right path.

The Acting President: In view of the long list of speakers in this thematic debate and the fact that the Assembly will continue meeting today until 9 p.m. and then tomorrow morning and afternoon — but hopefully not in the evening — I would reiterate the President's appeal to all speakers to limit their statements to a maximum of five minutes. Full texts of statements could, naturally, be distributed in the General Assembly Hall.

Mr. Akram (Pakistan): We thank the President of the General Assembly, His Excellency Srgjan Kerim, for convening this thematic debate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and for providing the background papers for the panel discussions on the first seven Goals.

Pakistan aligns itself with the statement made by Antigua and Barbuda, Chair of the Group of 77 and China at the 88th meeting.

Although the first seven MDGs are of extreme importance to developing countries, their achievement and sustainability depends significantly on the achievement of MDG 8 — "Developing a global partnership for development". We feel that to truly assess our progress on the track to achieving the MDGs by 2015, all eight Goals should be wholly addressed and their achievement, or lack thereof, recognized.

The decisions of the 2005 United Nations summit encapsulated the agreed commitments of all Member States to development. Those commitments include not just the MDGs but also the other development goals, which were internationally agreed at the series of major international conferences and summits held over the last decade. They include the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development, the Doha Conference on Trade, the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development and other, similar conferences. Additional and specific commitments were undertaken during the United Nations summit in 2005.

Again, while most developing countries have demonstrated a genuine dedication to implementing their part of those commitments by devising national development strategies, improving governance and creating a macroeconomic climate conducive to growth, trade and investment, the major developed countries, unfortunately, have not demonstrated a similar alacrity in implementing their part of the commitments in all areas of cooperation.

The available data indicate that at the halfway mark, the implementation of the MDGs is off track in many countries, especially in Africa. Half the world, nearly 3 billion people, live on less than $2 a day.

For the majority of developing countries, concessional development financing remains an essential input for the realization of the MDGs and other international development goals. Several current negative trends in official development assistance (ODA) prove the disappointing levels of commitment from donor countries. ODA declined by 5 per cent in real terms between 2005 and 2006, and further declined in 2007.[1] Only five countries have met or exceeded the United Nations ODA target of 0.7 per cent. Current levels of ODA are 0.30 per cent among members of the Development Assistance Committee. ODA targets still rely heavily on debt cancellation and restructuring, which do not ensure a net financial inflow for development.

Multilateral and bilateral development assistance is, for the large part, not responsive to national policies and plans, since it is mostly earmarked to donor-determined sectors and projects. Currently, only 25 per cent of funding provided by the United Nations Development Programme is being spent on poverty reduction programmes. Such development financing is often accompanied by conditionalities tied to procurement from the donor country and/or expended largely on expensive consultants and experts from United Nations agencies or donor organizations.

In many cases, the net outflow of resources from developing to developed countries exceeds the level of development financing due to growing trade deficits, transfer of invisibles and capital flight. Also, the flow of foreign direct investment is mostly concentrated on a few dynamic emerging markets, while the majority of developing countries remain starved of private investment flows.

The effectiveness and quality of assistance are as vital as its quantity for the realization of the MDGs. We welcome the adoption of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and hope that it will be implemented by all donor countries. The most effective cooperation is that which responds to the national objectives, plans and priorities of the concerned developing country.

The need for the coordination, harmonization and coherence of aid policies and actions is all the more important now with the addition of new development actors and donors. Such coordination and coherence should be promoted at the country level by the Government of the partner country, as well as at the global level by the United Nations.

We have consistently underlined the need to develop and refine mechanisms to effectively monitor the progress of implementation of the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals. While some steps have been taken, including by developing countries, to improve MDG monitoring at the country level, there is an urgent need for comprehensive monitoring at the global level.

Such a specific monitoring mechanism will be an effective tool for the success of the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum that have been established under a revitalized Economic and Social Council. At its substantive session, the Annual Ministerial Review should review the status of implementation of various commitments and provide policy guidance on the operational steps required for their realization. We hope that the Development Cooperation Forum will receive and review the reports on the operational activities of all United Nations and other development agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions. That mechanism should serve to enhance the effectiveness and coherence of international development cooperation and its responsiveness to national development plans and strategies. The Forum should also address issues relating to the quality and quantity of development assistance and aid effectiveness.

While there are fairly specific indicators to measure advancement in regard to the first seven MDGs, there has been no concerted effort to evolve such targets and benchmarks to measure the realization of MDG 8 and the other internationally agreed development goals. We propose that all relevant United Nations agencies and international financial institutions contribute to the elaboration of such specific time-bound targets and benchmarks to facilitate the monitoring of the implementation of the international partnership for development.

As the United Nations millennium report concludes, that international partnership should be based on three pillars: financing, trade and technology. We propose that the policy decisions and commitments undertaken in each of those areas be clearly reflected in a comprehensive matrix prepared by concerned United Nations agencies, including the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. Thereafter, specific and appropriate benchmarks and targets could

be indicated and used to measure the implementation of specific goals and commitments.

Finally, even as we focus on the implementation of the MDGs and the other internationally agreed development goals, it is important not to lose sight of the major and multiple challenges that developing countries continue to confront in an increasingly globalized but unequal international economy — the inequitable trading system, rising food and energy prices, and the ongoing financial and credit crises in the largest industrial economies. Those new challenges pose imposing obstacles for the developing countries to realize the goals of sustainable development, including the MDGs. The United Nations and other international financial and economic institutions must address those central challenges if we are to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): My delegation welcomes the opportunity to participate in this thematic debate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as it offers us, the United Nations family, a unique opportunity to undertake a stock-taking exercise of the progress achieved so far and the steps to be taken to realize the full attainment of those goals.

Let me briefly note that Jamaica aligns itself with the statement delivered by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. At the same time, we also welcome the statements delivered by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Prime Minister of Finland and the Foreign Minister of Mali, which underline the urgent action required by the global community to fully achieve the MDGs.

I believe that there is consensus in this Hall that the realization of the MDGs constitutes an integral part of the United Nations development agenda. We can also readily agree that the Millennium Development Goals are not a new agenda. The Goals have all, at various junctures during the life of this venerable Organization, been at the forefront of the United Nations development agenda dating back to the 1960s, when the General Assembly declared the first United Nations Development Decade. Every decade since then until the 1990s has been declared a United Nations Development Decade.

Despite the best efforts of the United Nations, the gap between developed and developing countries has widened, prospects for substantial social and economic growth in developing countries have deteriorated, and their position in international trade has weakened considerably owing to major changes in global trading arrangements in an ever-evolving global economy, including globalization. The MDGs therefore form a critical component of the United Nations efforts to refocus global attention on the advancement of the development prospects of the world's poorest.

At the mid-point to the achievement of the MDGs, reports point to mixed progress among some regions in reaching some of the Goals. While there have undoubtedly been visible gains, significant challenges remain in their overall implementation.

The full and effective implementation of the MDGs by 2015 remains a national priority for the Government of Jamaica. Accordingly, the Goals have been incorporated at various levels into our national development strategies. We have recorded successes in many areas, including poverty eradication, primary school enrolment, life expectancy and the eradication of communicable diseases, including malaria. While Jamaica is on track to meet the Goals within the specified time frame, we continue to work with our partners towards building on that foundation.

In that context, while underscoring the primary responsibility of national Governments for their own development, my delegation is of the view that the success of developing countries hinges largely on assistance received from developed countries. Concomitantly, we need to achieve qualitative and meaningful progress in the collective efforts to develop a genuine — I repeat, genuine — global partnership for development.

Jamaica therefore encourages our developed partners to fulfil their long-standing commitments to achieve the official development assistance (ODA) target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income by 2015. Despite commitments made in Monterrey in 2002, pledges made by the G8 in 2005 to double aid to Africa by 2010 and by the European Union, also in 2005, to allocate 0.7 per cent of gross national income to ODA by 2015, we note with deep concern that ODA has effectively declined in the past three years. The Goals, while distinct, are intricately related; hence, achievement of one makes progress in other areas possible. The importance of MDG 8 — global partnership for development — must therefore be emphasized.

Myriad challenges impede the progress of developing countries in realizing the MDGs. I will highlight two which my delegation deems to be of crucial importance. During the recently concluded thematic debate on climate change, several delegations, including that of Jamaica, pointed to the causal link between climate change and the efforts of developing countries in their pursuit of sustainable development and the achievement of global development benchmarks, such as the MDGs. It is an open secret that, while industrialized nations are the primary contributors to climate change, the developing world continues to pay the price. Tackling climate change and the achievement of the MDGs can be construed no longer as separate agendas, but rather as two sides of the same coin. Efforts to address both should therefore be mutually reinforcing.

International trade, as we all agree, is an engine for development. In order for the developing world to maximize the benefits which can be accrued from participating in international trade, including poverty eradication and job and wealth creation, the global trade regime should be made more conducive to progress in all developing countries. In that regard, we observe with great concern the stalemate in the negotiations in the Doha Development Round since 2001. If our developed partners are truly committed to the development dimensions of the Doha Round, an early and successful conclusion of the negotiations is indeed vital.

My delegation is currently examining the recently released report of the Secretary-General concerning improving the delivery of the mandates of development-related activities, which outlines proposals to strengthen the United Nations capacity to deliver its mandates on development. We agree with the Secretary-General that a stronger United Nations needs a stronger development pillar. Therefore, efforts to address the lopsided and lacklustre approach to addressing activities pertaining to the three pillars are most welcome. However, that is just one of the many steps in the long journey that the United Nations will need to undertake to effectively bolster the development pillar.

In conclusion, the clock is ticking as we approach the 2015 benchmark. Additional decisive and concerted action is needed now if our goals are to be accomplished. We have a political moral and ethical obligation to redouble our efforts; the future generations are relying on us.

Mr. Davide (Philippines): Due to time constraints, I will just read out some major portions of my prepared statement. Copies of the full text will be made available to all delegations.

The Philippines expresses its commendation and gratitude to the President of the General Assembly for convening this thematic debate. No one can dispute or doubt the wisdom of the choice of the topic and of the excellence with which it has been crafted.

As we come closer to the self-imposed target date on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), this thematic debate is not only most relevant, appropriate and in order; it is also urgently necessary and critically important. At the heart of the MDGs are social justice and human rights. The Constitution of the Philippines expressly provides that Congress shall give highest priority to the enactment of measures that protect and enhance the right of all the people to human dignity; reduce social, economic and political inequalities; and remove cultural inequities by equitably diffusing wealth and political power for the common good.

The Philippines gives top priority to achieving the MDGs. The policies and strategies in its medium-term Philippine development plan 2004-2010 are designed to pursue and achieve the MDGs. Key players in the Philippines have performed significant roles to help realize the MDGs. The Department of Budget and Management has issued policy guidelines and procedures in the preparation of national and local budget proposals, emphasizing the importance of funding programmes, projects and activities in support of the MDGs. The House of Representatives of the Congress of the Philippines formulated a MDG legislative agenda prioritizing legislative measures attuned and responsive to early realization of the MDGs. The Department of Interior and Local Governments issued a guide to the local Government units in interpreting and incorporating the MDGs into their local development planning and budgeting.

Social Watch Philippines, a non-governmental organization (NGO), led the joint NGO-legislators alternative budget advocacy campaign that resulted in an increase of 22.7 billion Philippine pesos in additional proposals for MDG-related activities, and the approval of 5 billion pesos for the 2007 national budget. Another NGO, Philippine Business for Social

Progress, led the business sector in crafting the Philippines MDG Framework for Business Action. The Framework shows how the business sector can help attain the MDGs. As of 2007, a total of 159 companies supported the business and MDGs programme and had invested an estimated 200 million pesos.

Midway towards 2015, the Philippines has made considerable strides in meeting most of the MDGs. Using the tracking methodology, the Philippines is likely to meet the targets on poverty reduction, nutrition, reducing child mortality, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and access to safe drinking water. The correct policy, plans and programmes are in place to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, and, given appropriate support from the Global Fund to fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Philippines will be able, hopefully, to attain that MDG target.

One particular area of progress in the achievement of the MDGs is the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. The Constitution of the Philippines expressly provides that the State recognizes the role of women in nation-building and shall ensure the fundamental equality before the law of women and men.

The Philippines has considerably improved its scores in the Gender-related Development Index and the Gender Empowerment Measure, which could be the main reason why the World Economic Forum ranked the Philippines sixth in the Global Gender Gap Index, making it the only Asian country in the top 10 countries of the world where women are given their rightful place and role in society. This achievement also recognizes the legislative foundations for promoting gender equality, namely, Republic Act No. 9262, also known as the Anti-Violence against Women and Their Children Act of 2004, and Republic Act No. 9208, also known as the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act of 2003.

Moreover, the Supreme Court of the Philippines has undertaken unprecedented moves to ensure that women participate directly in the judiciary's structures, processes and development programmes, projects and activities and benefit equally from them.

However, the Philippines has to accelerate efforts to meet the off-track MDG targets on access to primary education, reduction of the maternal mortality rate and access to reproductive health care.

As regards access to primary education, the Philippines has already laid the foundations for improvement through appropriate legislation. The school-building programme continues to be one of the Government's major priorities. The annual national budgets of the Philippines have consistently given the highest priority to education, as mandated by the Constitution, under which the State is directed to establish and maintain a system of free public education up to the high-school level.

However, the Philippines is faced with the problem of providing the huge amount of resources needed to construct classrooms, improve and print textbooks, and train and hire qualified teachers.

In addressing the targets under the fifth Millennium Development Goal — improving maternal health — the Philippines has to surmount an even greater obstacle. The current Philippine figures for the maternal mortality ratio and access to reproductive health services show that this MDG may be very difficult for the country to achieve by 2015. While Government policies and programmes are in place to solve this problem, an enormous amount of material resources are needed to achieve the targets.

These challenges are made more difficult by the fact that, in 2006, poverty in the country worsened, as the number of poor Filipinos increased, based on the latest poverty estimates.

Expenditures for social services as a percentage of the total budget in the Philippines have been declining in the past few years. Real capital spending on health, education, social security, welfare and employment and housing also went down. There is therefore a need to realign the national budget and place greater emphasis on social services, particularly on some off-track MDG targets. However, the external debt situation of the Philippines remains a major impediment to its efforts to reduce poverty.

The Philippines hereby reiterates its call to the United Nations — speaking now in a louder voice, with utmost seriousness and on a higher note of urgency — to consider the proposal for broader debt-for-equity arrangements to fund MDG-related programmes and projects. It calls on the United Nations to spearhead an international campaign to change the concept of debt sustainability from "capacity to pay" to "level of debt", thereby enabling developing countries like the Philippines to achieve the

MDGs without increasing debt and to finance the MDGs without being obstructed or hampered by debt service burdens.

The Philippines respectfully urges the United Nations to make social inclusion one of the guiding principles of the MDGs. The Millennium Declaration upholds the rights of children, women, migrants, migrant workers and their families. However, vulnerable sectors of society such as indigenous peoples, conflict-affected communities, and persons with disabilities have yet to be taken on board.

There is also a need to push for more opportunities for inclusive growth that are available to more people, particularly the poor, since such growth is consistent with and supportive of the MDGs.

Finally, there is now more than ever a crying need for a number of reforms in the United Nations system, such as those on United Nations system-wide coherence, mandate review and revitalization of the General Assembly, inter alia. There is also an urgent need for all United Nations responses to climate change to be implemented. Needless to say, these reforms would certainly make the United Nations more effective and efficient in all its work, including, but not limited to, the pursuit of the MDGs, and encouraging Member States to do more.

As to climate change, we need not recount the enormity of its disastrous effects on development and security and on our work to achieve the MDGs. The plain and simple fact is that responding to climate change will require the use of funds and resources that could otherwise have been directly channelled to poverty alleviation, reduction or management, education, health, and so on, thereby effectively reducing the budgets for such purposes and delaying further the accomplishment of these MDG-related programmes.

United Nations reform, innovative solutions, bold strategies, especially with regard to climate change, and collective efforts and actions are unavoidable and compelling if the achievement of the MDGs is to become a reality for all. To achieve the MDGs, our commitment must be firm and unyielding, our pursuit relentless. There is no room for complacency. We must neither rest nor tire nor weaken.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): Uganda attaches great importance to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and its follow-up mechanism. While we continue to invest a great deal of effort and resources to ensure success, we believe that attaining the goals requires coordinated action at both the national and the international level.

Uganda has streamlined all internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs, into a Poverty Eradication Action Plan (PEAP) which is designed to make their implementation effective and ensure the smooth flow of resources.

Like most developing countries, Uganda has faced great challenges in its efforts towards achieving the MDGs. But despite the challenges, some progress is being made, notably on the second, third, sixth and seventh Goals.

In 1997, Uganda embarked on a programme for universal primary education, effectively doubling primary school enrolment from 2.7 million to 6.5 million. Currently, enrolment has shot up to 7.6 million, of whom 50 per cent are girls. That is no mean achievement. The challenge that remains is to improve the quality of the education being provided, and I would mention here that Uganda has now embarked on a programme for universal secondary education.

Gender equality and empowerment of women is a cross-cutting issue in the Poverty Eradication Action Plan, as are the environment and HIV/AIDS. Thus, the Government has mainstreamed gender issues in all its developmental and social agendas.

Key progress on gender equality includes revising the national gender policy and refocusing its objectives. Progress on gender disparity among primary school pupils is way above the Poverty Eradication Action Plan target of 65 per cent for 2003.

We have reduced the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS from approximately 20 per cent in 1996 to the current level of 6.4 per cent.

Progress on the seventh MDG with specific regard to ensuring access to safe drinking water and sanitation has led to access in 50 per cent and 60 per cent of rural and urban areas, respectively.

That is part of the good news, but the bad news is that Uganda is off track on the important Goals 4 and 5, which are unlikely to be met by 2015. While there is a downward trend in poverty from 56 per cent to 31 per cent now, a lot remains to be done. The decline in

poverty has been more pronounced in urban areas. Several factors account for the disparities in the incidence of poverty, including insecurity, climate variations, HIV/AIDS incidence, type of agricultural activity and the degree of access to infrastructure and social services.

My delegation would like to underscore the fact that getting back on track on those goals entails a doubling of our efforts, but more crucial is effective and timely international support in aid of our nationally owned strategies. Let me point out some of the factors that hinder our realization of the MDGs which have to be addressed.

First, more than 75 per cent of the population is dependent for its livelihood on agriculture, which is the backbone of the economy. The important link between agricultural productivity, development and the standard of living remains critical in reducing poverty. The restricted market for agricultural exports is frustrating progress in the modernization of agriculture. I also want to mention here that the recent food import surges as a result of liberalization policies have resulted in killing industries and creating unemployment in developing countries as a consequence of lowered tariffs. Something must be done to ensure food security and the livelihood of rural folk.

Secondly, heavy dependence on the exportation of primary commodities keeps growth in the economy volatile, as it is affected by changes in the international commodity market. To be competitive, we must add value to our primary produce and also ensure quality standards.

Thirdly, high dependence on oil as a source of energy means that the sustained high oil prices will continue to weaken progress towards the MDGs.

Fourthly, our economy is donor-dependent to a large extent, with a heavy external debt burden to bear. The declining level of official development assistance flows and donors' reluctance to fulfil their commitments are greatly frustrating progress towards the MDGs. Further aid utilization must be nationally determined and oriented towards budget support rather than project-focused.

Fifthly, there is the question of a fast-growing population, although in Uganda, we believe, we have not reached the optimal growth to achieve the desired economic development.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate the call made by the Group of 77 to our development partners to fulfil their commitments in areas that are critical, such as trade, aid, investment, including transfer of technology, and financing for development. The United Nations has a key role to play in promoting global partnership for development. Through its country-level operational activities, it should continue to help developing countries to build the necessary capacity for the achievement of the MDGs. For our part, we are ready to fulfil our side of the bargain.

Mr. Sen (India): I, too, thank President Kerim for organizing this thematic debate, while recognizing the achievements in focusing on the ways of addressing challenges so as to bring us back on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

A very great heroic figure from Latin America, José Martí, summed up the MDGs in a single phrase. He said that all the world's glory can be fitted into a kernel of corn.

The MDGs are a quantifiable measure of human dignity. They are also an instrument for mobilizing international action. Here, I would say that MDG 8 is pivotal, though the focus of this debate on poverty and hunger, education and health is right in itself and certainly reinforces the MDG interlinkages. Efforts that we have noticed to redefine the MDG framework by selectively using commitments from the World Summit Outcome and to in fact dilute MDG 8 by transferring targets and indicators from MDG 8 to MDG 1 are a matter of concern.

Therefore, I hope that the Secretariat is aware that any attempt to proceed in that direction would actually undermine the legitimacy of the MDG framework itself. That is something that is ultimately also in the interests of the developed countries, because, to paraphrase Ruskin, the coloured tide that eddies at their doorstep is full of floating corpses, and if they wish to save them rather than to bury them, a meticulous and rapid implementation of MDG 8 is the path to an unencumbered shore.

The United Nations *Human Development Report 2003* suggested the solutions. The problem really is that those have not been adequately implemented. As far as my memory serves, the report says that we cannot halve poverty and hunger by 2015 without restructuring trade and agriculture. The fight against malaria and HIV will be lost unless there are affordable

medicines for the poor. Fiscal management and fiscal planning will be impossible without debt relief, according to the report.

And yet, we now have the same distance to travel to any of those ends that we had in 2003. The report also touches on technology for poverty reduction, public health and climate change, for which we now see the need. Indeed, in the case of all those issues, one cannot really make progress without addressing the intellectual property rights regime. Therefore, the United Nations will become progressively less relevant, in our view, unless it proceeds from words to action.

Of course, this is a good way of passing a warm afternoon, but nevertheless we have to see how the word can be made flesh, and that cannot be done without the United Nations using its massive and formidable convening power and harnessing it to the achievement of undoubtedly difficult action — for instance, a periodic audit of the International Monetary Fund; the establishment of a mechanism for debt relief, such as an international debt commission; or at least agreeing on some minimal exceptions to the intellectual property rights regime.

Economists have calculated that the protectionism of the developed actually costs the developing countries $700 billion in export income, which is 14 times what they receive as official development assistance. Thus, it is not a question of a shortage of resources. It is really about having very little stomach for structural change. In fact, it is not even in the interests of the ordinary folk in the developed world either, because it has been estimated that the subsidies and protectionism of the European Union, for instance, cost the Union's consumers $1 billion a day. Now, as Kishore Mahbubani has calculated in his latest book on Asia, Europe and economics, if we annualize that figure of $1 billion a day — as we all know, the cows in the European Union get a subsidy of $2 a day or thereabouts — there will be enough money for all the 60 million European cows to travel by business class around the world and also to be given $3,000 for shopping duty-free during the stops. The MDGs can certainly mitigate current deprivation, but if they are to really create a more just world, then they have to be combined with the tackling of the institutional and economic causes of poverty.

I would strongly support what the Permanent Representative of the Philippines said on the question of social and economic rights that are inherent in the achievement of the MDGs. This is true, and I would go further and say that the MDGs have now virtually become international customary law. This is why the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has criticized the World Bank Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers for emphasizing prioritization alone, rather than participation; in other words, the participation of the poor in poverty reduction and in all decisions that affect their lives. This is as important as the end result and is, in fact, essential to achieving the end result.

The poorest developing countries still remain caught in a raw-material/agricultural economy with minimal industry, as we can see when we glance at parts of sub-Saharan Africa and other regions. That is why, according to economists, they are offered debt relief rather than the eradication of the situation that creates debt and rather than the economic development which would make it possible for them to service their debt. That is why they are offered mosquito nets rather than the eradication of malaria.

The point is, as I said earlier, unless the United Nations tackles some of these issues with action, perhaps in lieu of having these thematic debates, because the question is not talking about MDG 8, it is rather a question of actually seeing through its implementation and monitoring this implementation and, in the Nietzschean phrase, having the "capital of spirit and will" to actually carry out structural change. Unless we do that and unless the United Nations goes beyond these afternoon thematic debates and goes into the realm of actually tackling these issues and taking action through structural change and institutional measures, these MDGs will, I am afraid, ultimately end up as some kind of permanent disaster relief or, as an economist has called it, some kind of welfare colonialism.

Therefore, it is important that we take account of these issues, not just here in the United Nations, but also in our multilateral and bilateral engagement with these countries that are the worst affected.

India has tried to keep this in view, in its interaction, for instance, with Africa. This is one of the reasons we emphasize items like the dedicated satellite and fibre-optic connectivity mission, the setting up of

information technology centres, the fact that Indian companies source their supplies locally, that they set up manufacturing plants, that they export capital goods which are then used by Africa for processing and for adding value to its own exports to the European and American markets.

We can only make poverty history, if, as the old saying goes, we understand the history of poverty. In the absence of an industrial policy of the kind I have just mentioned, we know what really happens. If you look, for instance, at the issue of debt: in 2003, 8 out of the 18 heavily indebted poor countries graduated and 4, or half of them, again relapsed. They relapsed because they reached 150 per cent of their gross domestic product in terms of their debt-service burden, which, according to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative definition itself is unsustainable.

In this context, it is also worth noting that in the last 26 years, that is, from 1980 to 2006, $685 billion have flown out of Africa as debt service. It is striking to note that this is equal to the total debt of all developing countries at the beginning of this process, at the beginning of this crisis, in 1979.

And, again, if you annualize it, it has been calculated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) that the annualization comes to $25 billion. Half of this, according to the FAO, would be enough to completely eradicate hunger. So, again, it is not a question of a shortage of resources, it is a question of political will to tackle structural change and to address the real issues.

In India, we practise at home what we practise abroad. Therefore, the Government of India has abolished all debt carried by the small and marginal farmers of India. In other words, it has waived all loans that were made to these groups throughout India. Quite clearly, no MDG can be achieved with a rural debt overhang.

Similarly, the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act of India, which guarantees 100 days of paid employment to every rural household, really makes the right to work legally enforceable. It also ensures in its design that this provision is not a dole, nor is it the digging of Keynesian holes in the ground. It is truly public investment, as it creates durable rural assets. And what is more important — and this brings me back to what I said earlier about the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the World Bank — is that it is actually implemented by elected village councils, or Panchayats, as they are called. In this way, achievement of the MDGs is the result of popular movement in favour of the rural poor. That is why Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, the Chairperson of the United Progressive Alliance, who called this a revolutionary measure, also laid the greatest emphasis on popular mobilization.

Therefore, the answer to the question in the very comprehensive economic paper circulated by the President is very clear, in our view: economic growth is not enough. Separate action is required on education and health, on hunger and poverty, on science and technology, free from external conditionalities or prescriptive advice.

Later, for those delegations that are interested, we will try to circulate a one-page statistical abstract on the physical and programme support measures that the Government in our country is taking in the necessary direction and in support of MDG-related activities.

For much is being done, including the midday meal programme, which now covers 129 million children and is arguably the greatest free lunch for children in the history of the world. Additionally, there is the electrification and the connecting telephonically of more than 25 villages annually, as well as the annual construction of 4,000 small rural houses. We shall try to circulate a short paper on this.

Therefore, I would conclude with what I have been saying in different ways, which is that without popular participation, it would be extremely difficult to achieve the MDGs. It is with this popular participation that we can achieve the MDGs, "rich with all the productive power of modern times, warm with all the fraternity of olden days". That is a phrase used by Aimé Césaire, one of the greatest poets of the Caribbean. And with that, I conclude.

Ms. Lisson (Australia): I would like to thank the President for convening this meeting so that together we can take stock of our progress and galvanize our efforts to tackle the remaining obstacles to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration in September 2000, the Millennium Development Goals have become a unifying force for international action to halve extreme poverty. At the midpoint to our target date, we must take the opportunity to reflect on

how far we have come, what remains to be done, and how we can ensure that, in 2015, we are in a position to celebrate the successful achievement of these significant development goals.

In our 2007/08 financial year, Australia will provide an estimated A$ 3.2 billion in aid — our largest ever investment in reducing poverty and achieving sustainable development. We are working with developing countries, particularly in our region, to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Our Government is determined to increase the quantity and the quality of Australian official development assistance (ODA). We will continue to increase our overseas aid programme with the goal of providing 0.5 per cent of gross national income by 2015/16. We understand the challenges that face donors in such a major scaling-up. However, this is not an empty promise. The Australian Government has taken steps to ensure we can achieve this target. Funding has been set aside in Australia's budget to support an increase in ODA to about A$ 4.3 billion in 2010/11, which is almost US$ 4 billion, representing a doubling of ODA within four years. In practical terms, that will mean greater investments in aid in key MDG sectors — health, basic education, water and sanitation, the environment and climate change.

We are focused on building well-functioning education systems in order to achieve the second and third MDGs. Australia is working to build the capacity of our partner Governments' national education systems to enable more boys and girls to complete schooling and to improve the relevance and quality of education so that students can enter productive employment and contribute to the future development of their countries.

Health is another priority. We recognize that the maternal and child mortality goals are the furthest off track. And, in response, Australia supports development projects which deliver essential maternal and neonatal health services and strengthen health systems in countries with high mortality. We also note the findings of the Commission on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific last week, which indicated that we are not currently on track to reverse the spread of HIV. Australia has made a substantial contribution to global efforts to address this situation and to provide universal access to HIV prevention, care and treatment, and we will continue to do so.

While education and health are crucial, we also cannot forget the need for environmental sustainability in pursuing the MDGs. Although there has been good progress on improving access to safe drinking water in many countries, progress on the sanitation target in the seventh MDG lags far behind. A priority for Australia is to improve water access and sanitation facilities across the Asia-Pacific region.

Climate change also poses a particular challenge to realizing the Goals. Having recently ratified the Kyoto Protocol, Australia is committed to assisting developing countries in our region to build resilience and adapt to climate change.

As we look towards 2015, we should be aware that the Millennium Development Goals will not be realized unless we move forward in alliance. Decisive action is needed from both developed and developing countries. Australia will be an active partner. We commend the MDG Call to Action launched in 2007 by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the Honourable Gordon Brown, which has created a strong force of global action involving all stakeholders: Governments, the private sector, civil society and faith groups.

We also acknowledge the important role of the United Nations as our global partner in delivering development assistance and in supporting developing countries in implementing their national development plans.

Closer to home, Australia is firmly committed to working in partnership with our geographical neighbours to achieve the goals. Through the Port Moresby Declaration of 6 March 2008, the Prime Minister of Australia, the Honourable Kevin Rudd, recently committed Australia to a new era of cooperation with Pacific island nations, based on mutual respect and mutual responsibility to work jointly to meet the Millennium Development Goals, to address our common challenges, and to raise the standard of living for people in the region.

Australia is committed to international efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, and we accept the internationally agreed aid volume target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for overseas development assistance.

Efforts to achieve the MDGs should remain central to the global development agenda, and our focus should be squarely on the delivery of concrete and tangible results. There must be a greater sense of urgency on the part of all of us — it is time to accelerate our efforts. Australia looks forward to engaging further in collective efforts to attain the Goals, including at the MDG Leaders Summit in September. We emphasize Australia's commitment to working in partnership with all Member States in the months and years ahead to make the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals a reality.

Mr. Mbuende (Namibia): My delegation profoundly thanks the President of the General Assembly for organizing this important and timely debate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The debate affords us an opportunity to take stock of the successes we have achieved so far, the challenges we have met along the way, and to visualize the way forward as we forge ahead in our determination to achieve the MDGs by the target date we have set for ourselves.

We associate ourselves with the statements by Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the Democratic Republic of the Congo on behalf of the Group of African States.

Namibia has made significant progress in its efforts to achieve the MDGs by 2015. We have met a significant number of the targets ahead of time. By the same token, meeting other targets remains a daunting task. Our efforts to meet the MDGs form an integral part of a national process of strengthening policies and mobilizing domestic and external resources towards our country's long-term development plan, "Vision 2030". National targets and indicators have been developed to ensure that the MDGs are firmly rooted in the successive five-year development plans and in the milestones of the long-term development vision.

Poverty in Namibia is defined in monetary terms based on household expenditure. It is measured by looking at the share of total household expenditure taken by food. If a high proportion of the household expenditure is devoted to food, then very little is left to satisfy other needs. Households are classified as relatively poor if 60 per cent or more of their total expenditure goes to food and extremely poor if the proportion is 80 per cent or more.

Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger in Namibia has been a cardinal policy objective for my country over the years, and it remains one of the greatest challenges the country faces today. It is gratifying to note, however, that significant progress has been made on this goal. Targets are likely to be met by 2015, unless some of the gains are reversed by extreme weather conditions, such as the current floods that have caused untold devastation.

Our national household income and expenditure surveys for 1993 to 1994 and 2003 to 2004 show that relative poverty was reduced from 38 per cent in 1993 to 1994 to around 28 per cent in 2003 to 2004; while extreme poverty declined from around 9 per cent to around 4 per cent during the same period. There are, however, significant differences in the incidence of poverty between rural and urban areas, between regions and among population groups. Poverty in rural areas is higher than in urban areas, although urban poverty also poses a challenge to our Government.

We have also made steady progress in the provision of services. About 97 per cent of our population has access to clean water, and about 70 per cent of people in urban centres has access to electricity, while the Government's rural electrification programme has so far covered about 15 per cent of rural areas. I should, however, hasten to add that progress has been painfully slow with regard to access to sanitation, which stands at 61 per cent in urban centres and at 32 per cent in rural areas.

We are cognizant of the fact that an educated population is a prerequisite to development. To that end, the Government has consistently allocated the highest percentage of the national budget to the education sector. That has enabled us to make significant progress in terms of access to basic education.

Net enrolment rates for primary education were recorded at 92 per cent in 2005. Enrolment rates for girls in both primary and secondary schools are higher, than those for boys: 94 per cent and 56 per cent compared with 91 per cent and 46 per cent, respectively. Unfortunately, the majority of students do not make it to tertiary education due to a variety of factors. Moreover, we have a long way to go when it comes to adult literacy, where the rate has remained at 85 per cent since 1994.

Overall progress in reducing infant mortality rates per 1,000 live births has been slow. Currently they stand at 49 for males and 55 for females. Child immunization campaigns have yielded positive results with regard to diseases such as polio and measles, which have almost been eliminated in our country. There are, however, areas where a lot more needs to be done. The percentage of children under 5 who are wasted is currently estimated at 7.5 per cent, who are stunted at 29 per cent and who are underweight at 24 per cent. With regard to improving maternal health, there is progress regarding the proportion of births attended by trained personnel. However, maternal mortality is still high, at 449 per 100,000 live births, thereby impeding progress towards achieving that goal by 2015.

Progress in combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases has also been slow, and, indeed, the situation may be worsening in some respects. The rate of prevalence of HIV/AIDS is high compared to 1992 but has stabilized since 2004. This is attributed to the incubation period of the disease. The prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in the Namibian population, as measured through sentinel surveys, stands at 19 per cent, and the disease is still the number one cause of death in the country. However, through the launching of the third medium-term plan on HIV/AIDS — covering the five-year period from 2004 to 2009 — our Government and its development partners have put in place a broad national response to the pandemic. Indeed, current surveys have shown that there is a significant decline in the number of new infections.

Progress in combating malaria and tuberculosis has been modest. Malaria, which is the third main cause of death among adults in Namibia, is mainly being fought through the Government's free distribution of treated mosquito nets to families with young children and the spraying of houses in malaria-prone areas with DDT. The morbidity rate for malaria has been reduced, from 238 per 100,000 in 2000 to 140 per 100,000 in 2006. The tuberculosis treatment success rate has also improved, from 58 per cent in 1996 to 69 per cent in 2006.

My country faces a number of challenges that inhibit the early attainment of the MDGs. They include the following.

Harsh weather conditions as a result of climate change continue to constrain our progress towards achieving the MDGs. Frequent droughts and floods have often led to crop failures and food insecurity. Resources earmarked for development are constantly being diverted to relief activities and the reconstruction of damaged or destroyed infrastructure.

Increasing world oil prices and the accompanying inflation tend to result in rising prices for food and other basic commodities, making them unaffordable for the average household.

Another constraint is the volatility in international financial markets, combined with our inability to access financing on international capital markets on concessional terms because of our status as a middle-income country. Furthermore, the risks generally associated with small-market economies have also posed serious challenges to our development efforts.

The continuous decline in the levels of official development and technical assistance has negatively affected progress in capacity-building for service delivery.

The brain-drain phenomenon has led to the overburdening of the few personnel who remain in critical sectors such as health and education, to name but two.

To get back on track in order to achieve the MDGs by 2015 requires deliberate action to make the international environment conducive to development. The Doha trade negotiations need to produce positive results, with development as the central pillar. Our efforts to adapt to the effects of climate change need to be supported through financing and the transfer of technology.

It is indeed high time for the General Assembly to adopt a resolution mandating the United Nations system to address the development needs of middle-income developing countries in a comprehensive manner by, among other things, targeting those sectors that are critical to the attainment of the MDGs.

The need for coherence between the development activities of international economic and financial institutions, on the one hand, and the United Nations system, on the other, cannot be overemphasized. It therefore follows that the implementation of MDG 8 is crucial to the achievement of the other Goals. Development is a collective responsibility. All of us

should fulfil our commitments and meet our obligations.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): Brazil welcomes this opportunity to take stock of the progress made in the timely achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to discuss our collective efforts to that effect.

It should be reiterated that the MDGs were not meant to replace the commitments undertaken by Member States at a series of United Nations conferences in the 1990s. The MDGs offer measurable benchmarks that help us to mobilize, guide and coordinate the national and international efforts necessary to honour those commitments. I believe that Ambassador Nirupam Sen of India reflected this thought very ably in his quotation of José Martí a few minutes ago.

Brazil has fully incorporated the MDGs into its national policies. We have actually established additional and more demanding goals. The results are encouraging. We have already achieved the target of halving the proportion of the population living on less than $1 a day. Our current target is to reduce that proportion to one quarter. Likewise, we have achieved the target of halving the number of those suffering from hunger. Now our aim is to fully eradicate that scourge by 2015.

Educational indicators show continued progress towards both universal completion of basic schooling and greater gender equality. The participation of females in the educational system is already slightly higher than that of males.

As is widely known, progress has also been made in combating HIV/AIDS. In 1996, Brazil introduced its national programme for sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, which ensures universal access to antiretroviral treatment. The mortality rate associated with AIDS has decreased ever since, and the proportion of Brazilians infected with HIV has remained steady in recent years.

As we try to look into the future, we have reason to believe that Brazil will achieve all the MDGs by 2015. Poverty and extreme poverty are on a downward trend, and there has been a noticeable reduction in income inequality. Cash transfer programmes linked with social policy requirements, such as the Bolsa Familia family stipend programme, and sustained substantive raises in the minimum wage have played a key role in that process.

Brazil's actions have not been limited to its territory. We have also assisted other developing countries in their efforts to achieve the MDGs. We have done so either through direct financing and support to more than 200 technical cooperation projects or by making resources available to multilateral funds and programmes.

Along with other Governments, Brazil has set up the International Drug Purchase Facility (UNITAID), which aims to facilitate access to drugs to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Just one year following its inception, UNITAID has already disbursed over $250 million in 80 beneficiary countries. We are also active in the Multilateral Debt Reduction Initiative and the MDG Call to Action against Poverty. The latter initiative brings together Governments, companies and civil society in maintaining the political momentum necessary to achieve the MDGs.

Brazil fully acknowledges that each country must take the primary responsibility for its own development. However, no one can deny the effects of the international trade and financial systems on the ability of Governments — especially those of least developed countries — to promote national development.

With respect to trade, it is in our common interest that the Doha Round come to a successful and timely conclusion, thereby providing wider access to goods and services from developing countries. Since most of the poor in those countries live in rural areas, liberalizing the market for agricultural products is critical. It is also high time to eliminate the distortions in the production and trade of agricultural goods caused by scandalous levels of export subsidies and domestic support in much of the developed world.

With regard to international finance, bilateral and multilateral debt relief initiatives must be supported and, whenever possible, strengthened. The resources freed up by such initiatives will help poor indebted countries to face health and education challenges, thus improving prospects for the timely achievement of the MDGs. In addition, increased volumes of official development assistance (ODA) remain vital to development financing, especially for the poorest nations. In that connection, we recall that innovative

financial mechanisms are an important complement to ODA, but certainly not a substitute.

The current financial crisis could prove to be particularly perverse. Global financial turmoil is taking place precisely at a time when developing countries are reaping the economic and social benefits of decade-long efforts to eliminate sources of instability in their own economies. We must not allow hard-won gains in the developing world to be threatened by vulnerabilities generated at the very centre of the world economy. Such a scenario must be avoided if we want developing countries to continue to play a role in sustaining global economic growth.

Enhancing the coherence and governance of the international monetary, financial and trade systems and increasing the participation of developing countries in such systems will strengthen our ability to restore and maintain stability and growth.

The founders of the United Nations conceived it as a key instrument in ensuring peace and security after the catastrophic effects of the Second World War. They realized that such a goal required that all peoples should be provided with the necessary conditions for developing and improving their living standards.

The MDGs represent the most recent and important initiative of the United Nations to engage the entire membership in the fight for development. Brazil has high hopes that we will be able to surmount the many obstacles to attaining the MDGs and thus win that battle. We must not let pass this occasion to recommit to the formidable but clear objective we ourselves have set: sustainable development with equity for all.

The Acting President: We have just passed the two-hour mark in our debate and have heard only 11 speakers. If we continue to move at the current pace, I do believe that a night meeting will be necessary tomorrow, in addition to meetings on Friday morning and afternoon and possibly during the weekend as well. I doubt whether members would want that. Accordingly, I reiterate the appeal for everyone to speak no more than five minutes, and to distribute in the Hall extended versions of their statements, so that we can afford all speakers an opportunity to speak and can finish by midday tomorrow at the latest. Otherwise, we may be here for a very long time.

Mr. Penjo (Bhutan): In heeding your call, Sir, I will be very brief. I would like to express my delegation's appreciation for the President's initiative and leadership in holding this important thematic debate.

We would like to associate ourselves with the statements made by the Chairs of the Group of 77 and China, the Group of Least Developed Countries and the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries.

In 2000, our leaders agreed on the Millennium Declaration, which outlined eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to benefit all people by reducing poverty and improving the livelihoods of nearly one sixth of humankind by 2015. At the midpoint to the target date, many of those Goals are far from being met. That calls for urgent and concerted action by the international community, so as to be able to meet in their entirety the commitments made in the 2000 Declaration.

I would like to take this opportunity to inform the Assembly that Bhutan successfully held its first parliamentary elections last week. Almost 80 per cent of registered voters cast their ballots, bringing Bhutan into the fold of the democratic nations of the world. The formation of the new Parliament and the subsequent adoption of our first written Constitution will affirm Bhutan's transition to a democratic constitutional monarchy.

Mrs. Ataeva (Turkmenistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Bhutan is fully committed to achieving the MDGs. The Royal Government has been making concerted efforts to alleviate poverty through improved access to roads, health, education, electricity and microfinancing services. Moreover, our tenth five-year plan, which begins this year, is primarily focused on poverty alleviation.

While we are on track to achieve most of the MDGs, there are a few goals that need immediate attention, such as achieving gender parity at the tertiary level of education, bringing down the rising rate of unemployment, particularly among young people, and reducing the risks of HIV/AIDS.

Furthermore, the grave effects of climate change will make the task of meeting the MDGs more difficult. The irony of climate change is that its worst impacts will be on the developing world, particularly

small landlocked countries and island developing countries, which are least responsible for the problem.

In this regard, Bhutan has two major concerns about climate change. The first is its adverse impact on agriculture, which is the mainstay of 79 per cent of our population. The second is the threat of glacial lake outburst floods, known as GLOFs, which have severe consequences for our fertile agrarian land and human settlements. Furthermore, any instances of GLOFs could devastate our hydropower facilities and undermine the power sector, which remains Bhutan's largest source of revenue.

Urgent steps are needed to help the poorest countries adopt climate change strategies that reduce the vulnerability of their populations and improve their adaptive capacity.

We continue to face the demographic constraints of being a small population that subsists in a fragile ecosystem handicapped by the physical constraints of having a mountainous and landlocked country. The challenges are particularly acute for the delivery of social services, the improvement of agricultural productivity and the development of a dynamic private sector. Extensive capital investments in rural and urban infrastructure and intensive capacity-building at various levels are required to ensure a smooth transition to a self-reliant economy.

With the support of the United Nations, the Gross National Happiness Commission published the Bhutan Millennium Development Goals Needs Assessment and Costing Report in 2007. This report gives a detailed assessment of the financial, human and institutional resources and policy reforms required by Bhutan for meeting the MDGs.

While Bhutan is on track to achieve the MDGs, scarcity of resources continues to stand in the way of the full realization of these goals. Bhutan will need to invest around $2.5 billion between 2006 and 2015 to successfully implement the interventions identified by the thematic task forces for achieving the MDGs.

Bhutan's guiding philosophy remains Gross National Happiness, and all our development efforts will continue to be people-centred, including the fulfilment of our commitments in achieving the MDGs. As Bhutan takes its first steps in self-rule, it is extremely important that the first democratically elected Government succeed in all spheres of social, political and economic life, thereby clearly signalling that the legacy of more than 100 years of peace and prosperity is now in good hands.

We thank our development partners for their invaluable assistance to Bhutan's development and have full confidence in their continued support at this important juncture in our history.

Mr. Bodini (San Marino): We commend President Kerim's initiative in convening this General Assembly debate on recognizing the achievements in and addressing the challenges as we journey towards fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015.

Yesterday, a number of distinguished panellists confirmed that while several targets have been partially met, many others remain elusive, including poverty, hunger, health and education targets. Exploding population growth, armed conflict, massive migration, climate change and unrelenting diseases, as well as global financial and economic turmoil, are undermining attainment of the goals of developing and least developed countries.

As we were reminded by yesterday's panellists, the official development assistance (ODA) aggregate contribution is lagging to the tune of $40 billion to $50 billion. At the same time, we were told that several recipient countries have not perfected their national development policies and that more transparency and good governance are needed to optimize results and, what is more important, to attract larger public and private contributions.

San Marino believes that even small countries like ours can and must be part of the development process under the United Nations umbrella. The General Assembly is where all Member States can and must negotiate, establish, monitor and reassess from time to time the long-term development goals, taking into account evolving situations and changing factors in our very complicated world. We believe that this small step can have a major impact if we reaffirm our political commitment and if we engage at all levels, with the active participation of civil society and the private sector.

San Marino has been working towards the achievement of the MDGs and renews its full support for and commitment to the process. We would like to underline on this occasion our activities in the field of

gender equality, where we have engaged in a campaign to combat violence against women in the context of the Council of Europe. The results have been positive, and we plan to continue to develop our programme in line with the efforts of the Secretary-General's initiative in this field, an initiative that we fully support.

San Marino continues to be concerned about the situation of children worldwide. According to some forecasts, many developing countries will be able to reach the 2015 goal of reducing child mortality by two thirds, but unfortunately many more will not. We commend the work done thus far to stop the spread of tuberculosis, but we are aware that this disease, together with HIV/AIDS and malaria, is still among the major causes of mortality, especially in children and women. We should not forget that all three diseases are preventable and treatable.

In this regard, San Marino has contributed to the UNICEF programme aimed at preventing the HIV infection of African mothers and children. We believe that even small projects to solve specific needs can produce immediate, effective and lasting benefit. San Marino firmly believes that the United Nations system is very well placed to enable Member States like ours to become contributors to worthy causes.

In this context, our Government, in conjunction with the private sector, supports UNICEF programmes on youth activities in the field of social development and public awareness of children's rights. An educated and informed child will grow into a citizen able to contribute to a peace-driven, development-conducive and environment-friendly world.

Mrs. Aitimova (Kazakhstan): I would like first to thank President Kerim for having convened this thematic debate and to welcome his firm intention to move the process of implementing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) forward.

Kazakhstan fully maintains its commitments to the timely and effective achievement of the MDGs and other goals in the development field. According to the report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the status of implementation of the MDGs, Kazakhstan has already achieved the main targets of two MDGs, namely, ensuring universal primary education and the promotion of gender equality.

Nevertheless, despite these achievements, the country has set up new targets under these two goals such as the improvement of the quality of education, the creation of equal opportunities for men and women, and the elimination of gender-based violence.

It is also reported that Kazakhstan will probably achieve the target of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger.

During the annual ministerial review of the Economic and Social Council in 2008, Kazakhstan will make a voluntary national presentation giving a full assessment of our progress towards achieving a number of MDGs related to primary education, gender equality and environmental sustainability.

Recognizing that poverty is one of the most important challenges, the Government of Kazakhstan is making considerable efforts to develop and implement a poverty-reduction strategy that ensures growth in people's real income. We are also working to establish a viable social insurance system and to promote employment for socially vulnerable members of the population. As a result of those measures, the MDG of halving the proportion of poor people in Kazakhstan by 2015 will be achieved.

The 2005 report on the status of the MDGs in Kazakhstan indicates that three health-related MDGs — namely, Goals 4, 5 and 6 — are unlikely to be achieved without serious efforts aimed at the development of the health-care system, which deteriorated seriously during the transition period. To reverse negative trends in the health sector, the Government of Kazakhstan has appreciably increased financing for health-care services — up to 4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP). Particular attention is being paid to maternal and child health care, which is free of charge. Moreover, the reservations of experts with regard to the achievement of MDG 4 stemmed from a discrepancy in the definition of a live birth. Just two years ago, Kazakhstan accepted the World Health Organization's definitions of a live birth and a stillbirth.

The problem of ensuring environmental sustainability is of special concern to the Government of Kazakhstan. In order to ensure environmental sustainability, a national plan of action on environmental protection and the concept of ecological security has now been adopted to cover the period 2004 to 2015. Kazakhstan's new priorities in the area of environmental protection include the introduction of ecological standards in the economy, legislation and

the society at large. By 2024, Kazakhstan plans to cut carbon emissions per unit of GDP to about one third of their current level, as well as to increase energy from alternative sources by at least 250-fold.

Target 9 of MDG 7 is fully in line with the priorities of our national strategy entitled "Kazakhstan 2030". Because only 60 per cent of our population has access to safe water, the Government of Kazakhstan has developed a drinking water programme covering the period up to 2010. We have also allocated approximately $1 billion in our budget to that end. The aim is to develop the public water supply system, including water management. As of today, almost 2,000 km of water pipeline has been built throughout the country.

It is widely acknowledged that, in order to achieve the MDGs, special efforts have to be made to ensure that landlocked countries like Kazakhstan will make the necessary progress under the MDG targets. The challenges and constraints faced by landlocked developing countries are enormous. Participants at the International Ministerial Conference on Transit Transport Cooperation and the sixty-third session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which took place in Almaty in 2003 and 2007, respectively, recognized that the high costs of trade transactions, influenced by the lack of access to the sea and remoteness from major markets, represent the main cause of the marginalization of landlocked developing countries. That situation is aggravated by the fact that most of those countries, including Kazakhstan, do not belong to the World Trade Organization and are isolated from main international trade flows.

It is therefore very important to ensure the implementation of the decisions and recommendations of major international conferences on trade and development, so that vulnerable economies finally get a chance to enjoy the benefits and advantages promised at the conferences. The upcoming October midterm review of the Almaty Programme of Action is of crucial importance for landlocked developing countries in terms of reaffirming the commitments of the international community to address, in a timely and effective manner, the special needs of landlocked developing countries with regard to achieving the MDGs.

In conclusion, I would like once again to reiterate the commitment of Kazakhstan to its obligations undertaken at the Millennium Summit and to the decisions of other international United Nations conferences and meetings.

Ms. Ghannam (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): I would first like to thank the President of the General Assembly for organizing this thematic debate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which will no doubt help to raise awareness at the international level about the significance of the MDGs and the need to ensure their achievement by 2015.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on behalf of the African Group.

Adopted in 2000 at the Millennium Summit by heads of State and Government, the MDGs have served as a catalyst in mobilizing all our strength and resources at the national and international levels to combat poverty throughout the world. Halfway to the target date set for the achievement of the MDGs, we can now take stock of the tangible progress that has been made in many parts of the world with the exception of Africa, which is not on track to achieve all the MDGs.

Despite their political resolve, their determination, the reforms made in economic and social policy and the promotion of good governance and the rule of law, the African countries have not been able to achieve a high enough level of sustainable economic growth to meet the targets set by the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, despite the promises made and the commitment to increase assistance to developing countries, most donors have not met the goal of devoting 0.7 per cent of their gross national product (GNP) to official development assistance (ODA). The commitment to double assistance to Africa has not been honoured. Efforts to provide debt relief have benefited only a limited number of countries. The World Trade Organization (WTO) multilateral trade negotiations remain deadlocked, and the commitment made at Doha to place development at the centre of negotiations is far from being met.

As recognized in the Monterrey Consensus, while development remains a national responsibility, the contribution of developed countries is essential to give expression to the global partnership for development.

The achievement of Millennium Development Goals 1 to 7 depends upon Goal 8. In that regard, donors must implement the commitments made in the areas of ODA, debt relief, market access, technology transfers, capacity-building and technical and scientific assistance.

The United Nations and its various agencies and programmes have a role to play in promoting solidarity between North and South, thereby enabling the wealthy to come to the aid of the poor, so that the challenges posed by poverty worldwide are overcome. Experience has shown that poor countries cannot face those challenges without strengthened international cooperation and a conducive environment. Indeed, the progress achieved in certain countries proves that, through a combination of political will, appropriate strategies, sustainable financing mechanisms, an international environment conducive to development and international solidarity, we can give hope to poor populations lacking access to basic services, especially in the areas of health, education and access to drinking water and electricity.

Moreover, the contribution of South-South cooperation is significant. Current trends in trade and investment point to the role and impact of South-South cooperation on the mobilization of resources and the well-being of peoples. For its part, Morocco is actively involved in the promotion of regional and subregional integration, in particular within Africa, as reflected by the initiatives and partnerships that Morocco and its African partners have launched in various areas, such as health, housing, water, agriculture, services and training.

At the national level, through a policy geared towards the social sectors, Morocco is firmly committed to meeting the target date of 2015. Thus, the proportion of the State budget allocated to those sectors grew significantly from 39 per cent in 1993 to over 47 per cent in 2002 to 55 per cent in 2005. The launching of our national human development initiative in April 2005 further bolstered the policies and efforts of the State in the social sphere. The initiative seeks to reduce poverty and to place human development at the heart of the State's activities through a participative, transparent and democratic approach that involves citizens in the development of their community.

Our national assessment shows that Morocco is on track to meet the MDGs and that the efforts made to date must be sustained if we are to do so. In that context, the national budget for 2008 seeks to give new impetus to the promotion of human development. The Government's activities will focus on accelerating the reform of the education and training sectors, promoting a social environment and employment, and increasing medical coverage and the number of public hospital structures in the various zones of the country, in particular in the rural areas, so as to reach vulnerable populations.

Three extremely important conferences will be convened this year. The high-level meeting on Africa's development needs, the high-level event on the MDGs to be convened by the Secretary-General, the Doha International Follow-up Conference on Financing for Development and other conferences will provide an opportunity strongly to promote international cooperation for the achievement of the MDGs.

Mr. Soborun (Mauritius): Midway to the targets set for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), we meet today to take stock of progress achieved so far. Unfortunately we observe that the record is quite dismal, to say the least. Based on the present trends, it is evident that we are definitely lagging behind and that there is very little chance that the set goals will be met.

Today's meeting is in fact of great significance as it provides us with an opportunity to explore the avenues still open to us to salvage the situation. I would therefore like to commend President Srgjan Kerim for convening this timely thematic debate on recognizing the achievements, addressing the challenges and getting back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015.

While the overall picture of the developing countries may portray some positive gains and provide a cause for more optimism, the fact of the matter remains that a vast majority of countries, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, are lagging well behind the targets. Poverty has continued to rise and is projected to reach the 360-million mark by 2015. The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to ravage sub-Saharan Africa, with 1.7 million infected every year. Malaria and tuberculosis continue unabated in the same region. In that context, one is tempted to ask whether the bar set for the MDGs was unrealistic or whether we have done too little and moved too slowly.

There is no doubt that skyrocketing oil prices are creating real havoc in the economic growth of many countries around the world, and most particularly in the least developed countries and the small island developing States. The fuel bill is eating up so much of the national budgets of those poor countries that hardly anything is left for development purposes. Compounded with the high oil prices are the negative effects of climate change and global warming. We are witnessing floods and droughts, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, of a scale and magnitude unheard of previously. Jointly, those two factors do not leave much scope for successful agricultural production or the much-anticipated green revolution essential to feed people. The situation is further aggravated for those who are net importers of food. When food security becomes a threat, development needs to take a back seat.

Thus, we find ourselves in a situation in which many developing countries, in spite of their tremendous and genuine efforts, are caught in an impasse. While many sub-Saharan African countries are struggling to meet their MDG targets, their raw materials and mineral resources are being exploited to the fullest extent at cheap prices for exportation by foreign mining and extracting companies to meet growing demands in the industrializing countries. Those companies are experiencing a business boom on an unprecedented scale. They are making substantial windfall gains. It is only fair that those companies recognize their corporate social responsibilities and contribute a specific percentage of the windfalls to the concerned raw-material-producing countries to help them achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Unless the international community honours the commitments and pledges made in the Millennium Declaration and at the 2002 Monterey Conference on Financing for Development, the 2005 World Summit — in particular the target of 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product in official development assistance agreed by developed countries in accordance with set timetables — and the Gleneagles G-8 commitment to double official development assistance to Africa by 2010, there are very faint chances that we can make significant progress towards the realization of the MDGs.

Furthermore, we hope that the Doha International Follow-up Conference on Financing for Development later this year and the United Nations high-level meeting on Africa's development needs in September will not only help put the developing countries back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015, but will fast-track the commitments and pledges made at the international level to assist developing countries in their efforts to achieve the development goals. We also firmly believe that South-South cooperation can also play a pivotal role in spurring economic growth, promoting industrial development and helping in poverty reduction.

As far as my country is concerned, I should like to state that, in spite of its inherent constraints, lack of natural and mineral resources and distance from the lucrative markets of the world, we have achieved most of the MDGs and are on track to attaining the remaining ones on time. That is the result of a combination of factors, most important among which are enlightened leadership, political stability, social justice, democracy, accountability and transparency, and good governance. The separation of powers between the judiciary, the legislative and the executive, and respect for the rule of law and institutions have been the hallmarks of successive Governments since independence in 1968. An effective civil service, backed by a decent pay package, has performed remarkably well and has all along very diligently upheld the laws and regulations of the various branches of Government.

The private sector, which has been primarily engaged, over the course of two centuries, in the production and export of sugar cane, has taken full advantage of the incentives, facilities and infrastructure placed at their disposal by the Government. The partnership between the public and the private sectors has contributed significantly to the diversification of the economy in sectors such as tourism, textiles, manufacturing of apparel and garments — primarily for export — and banking and telecommunication services, to name but a few.

There has also been massive investment in education. As a matter of fact, only eight years after independence, education was made free at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. This has contributed tremendously to human resources development and has been highly instrumental in the economic growth of the country. Since 2005, even transport facilities have been made available free of charge to all boys and girls attending school, college and university.

The maintenance of the welfare State is reflected in the availability of free health services, free education and social benefits, among other things. It is worth mentioning that the Ministries of Education, Health, Social Security and Women and Child Protection together account for about 36.5 per cent of the recurrent budget.

Mauritius today has a per capita income of almost $6,000. While the Government is deploying all its efforts to raise the gross national income, it is also conscious of the fact that higher per capita income in and of itself will not mean much if the wealth is not fairly distributed. Not surprisingly, therefore, the present Government, led by The Honourable Navinchandra Ramgoolam, has made putting people first and the democratization of the economy its central objectives — and we are indeed witnessing the democratization of the economy.

At the regional level, the Government of Mauritius will be hosting the Southern African Development Community International Conference on Poverty and Development on 20 April. It is expected that the conference will, inter alia, adopt a regional poverty reduction framework with specific, measurable, attainable and time-bound targets with a clear monitoring and evaluation mechanism.

Let me conclude by saying that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by the set date would only be the first step towards sustainable economic growth. It is absolutely necessary that we succeed in this endeavour.

Mr. Frommelt (Liechtenstein): We thank the President of the General Assembly for his initiative to convene this important thematic debate, which deals with three core questions for development, that is, poverty, health and education. These issues cover the concerns of six out of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and, basically, concern all targets.

The seventh Millennium Development Goal (MDG), on environmental sustainability — not on today's agenda — should be taken into account when dealing with these fundamental issues. The linkages are obvious and therefore need not be underscored. Recently, the General Assembly devoted a special thematic debate to the sub-issue of climate change. Unfortunately, the latter thematic debate then failed to address the interrelationships with these three fundamental questions.

The commitments undertaken as part of the Millennium Development Goals are, in practice, intrinsically enmeshed with other important commitments to which we all agreed. The 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1) clearly states that multilateral solutions to problems in areas other than development need to be found. These areas are peace and collective security, human rights and the rule of law, as well as the strengthening of the United Nations.

For development to succeed in the medium to long term, good governance, in the broadest sense, is basically a sine qua non. It is for this reason that the Liechtenstein Government decided a few years ago to treat the promotion of good governance as a priority issue in its multilateral development cooperation.

Let me briefly turn to what my country is doing in concrete, practical terms, as we speak, to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. The Government decided some years ago to consistently increase its official development assistance (ODA) towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income (GNI), as reaffirmed by the Monterrey Consensus. Liechtenstein is on track and will hopefully be able to reach an ODA of 0.6 per cent of GNI in 2008.

The three main issues of today's debate are incorporated in our new national law on humanitarian and development cooperation. The promotion of basic food and health supply as well as basic education and vocational training, in particular in rural and structurally weak regions, is the core of our bilateral development cooperation. With the new law, the various development actors in Liechtenstein are also in charge of public outreach. They are bound to regularly report about the focus areas, the organizations, the objectives and the impact of Liechtenstein's humanitarian and development cooperation. We regard it as essential to promote the Liechtenstein population's understanding of the causes of underdevelopment and poverty as well as possibilities for their alleviation.

Currently, the Liechtenstein Development Service organizes, for example, a series on "A Vision for Africa". Liechtenstein is also positioning itself as an active and competent agent in the field of microfinance. It launched the public-private

partnership Microfinance Initiative Liechtenstein in 2005. The Initiative promotes projects through which microfinance investment opportunities are created in the financial services sector.

Liechtenstein realizes that microfinance is one of the ways to contribute to development. Liechtenstein also sees microfinancing as an important contribution to fighting poverty, in particular by stimulating entrepreneurship in targeted developing countries. Liechtenstein shares the opinion of the United Nations publication *World Economic Situation and Prospects 2008* that "strong economic growth, while not the only condition, is essential to ... generating the necessary resources to achieve the Millennium Development Goals".

In many developing countries, stable economic growth has become a fact of life, so that these countries have consistently surpassed those in the developed world. The increasingly important role that some developing countries are now playing in the global economy goes hand in hand with new responsibilities. In a world that is often described as a global village, all national actors in the North and in the South need to pull their fair weight.

It is only natural that some developing countries should enhance their contribution to global development, particularly to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. This aspect is important for getting back on track to achieve the MDGs by 2015 in a more sustainable and effective way.

With regard to the Monterrey Consensus, the status of the implementation of its six leading actions is currently under review. Many activities and initiatives have been put into place, and positive effects on the consensus are palpable. The follow-up Conference in Doha will be another important milestone on our road to 2015. Millennium Development Goal 8, on global partnerships, intersects with the Monterrey Consensus, containing targets such as those related to aid, trade and debt relief. We are of the opinion that more can and must be done in these areas.

Let me assure the Assembly that Liechtenstein will continue to show international solidarity in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Ms. Ochir (Mongolia): My delegation commends the timely initiative of the President of the General Assembly, Srgjan Kerim, and the strong leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in marshalling the efforts of the international community through stock-taking of the mid-point implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and identifying the way forward towards their achievement by 2015.

My delegation associates itself with the statements made earlier by the head of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by the head of the delegation of Mali on behalf of the group of landlocked developing countries.

A clear message emerged from yesterday's discussions: commitments made under the global partnership for development ought to be honoured in good faith if we are serious about achieving the MDGs. The global partnership for development represents a global compact between developed and developing States.

Both sides need to live up to their commitments. While developing countries are making every effort to formulate and implement sound policies to ensure their sustainable development and to that end are mobilizing domestic resources, it is up to the developed countries to support such efforts through the provision of development financing, including official development assistance, in a timely and sufficient manner and by ensuring increased market access for developing countries. In this regard, the call for the formulation of clear benchmarks for MDG 8 ought to be urgently embraced. Furthermore, we wish to stress the importance of introducing innovative sources of financing.

In that regard, we welcome the proposal for an international programme of action for the period 2008 to 2015 to complement national efforts to achieve the MDGs with supportive global programmes, measures and policies aimed at expanding the development opportunities of developing countries. Indeed, focusing global efforts on individual MDG objectives each year could prove useful in getting back on track.

Mongolia stands committed to the implementation of its MDGs. Following the first national report on MDG implementation, the parliament of Mongolia adopted a resolution in April 2005 endorsing the national MDGs, tailored to addressing the country's specifics and its special needs. The parliament resolution entrusted the relevant State

entities with the implementation and monitoring of the MDGs and provided for the allocation of necessary resources in the annual State budget.

One particular feature of Mongolia's specific MDGs was the adoption of an additional, ninth, goal on promoting human rights, fostering democratic governance and fighting corruption. This was an innovative step reflecting the inseparable link among development, good governance, human rights and democracy.

Within the framework of working towards meeting that goal, the parliament passed a law against corruption, thus creating a legal environment in which to remove the shackles that this phenomenon imposes on development. In accordance with the new law, a new anti-corruption body was set up that deals with raising public awareness, the prevention and detection of corruption, investigation of corruption cases and auditing of financial and income declarations of public officials. Mongolia has also joined the United Nations Convention against Corruption and has recently expressed its interest in joining the pilot review programme countries.

Recently, the parliament considered the second national report on the implementation of the MDGs. The progress looks mixed: along with encouraging achievements, difficult challenges remain. Out of 22 Mongolia-specific MDG targets, almost 60 per cent have been achieved or are likely to be achieved by 2015. I am pleased to report that Mongolia succeeded in the early achievement of targets relating to such areas as the ratio of girls to boys in secondary schools, the percentage of children covered by measles immunization, and infant mortality and under-five mortality rates.

Nonetheless, the report also sends a warning signal that the achievement of other targets is slow or regressing. The most challenging among them relate to poverty-level incomes, tuberculosis, housing, the enhancement of gender equality at the political decision-making level, the female-to-male ratio of students in tertiary education, increasing the percentage of land area covered by forest and the net enrolment rate in primary education.

The report further concludes that among the reasons for slow achievement are an insufficient degree of mainstreaming of the MDGs in policies being pursued, weak coordination among Government institutions and limited involvement of local government and civil society in policy implementation and monitoring.

With the support of the United Nations Development Programme, Mongolia has also conducted needs-assessment cost-analysis exercises which revealed that achievement of the MDGs will require $14 billion. Mobilization of such resources would entail increased and focused support on the part of our development partners, since the total gross domestic product of Mongolia in 2007 stood at approximately $3.2 billion.

Over recent years, Mongolia has been experiencing robust economic growth: an average of 9 per cent annually. Yet, translating rapid economic growth to significant poverty reduction remains a major challenge. To address this challenge, my Government has been undertaking a host of quick impact measures. These include a 420 per cent salary raise in the public sector, the provision of a monthly allowance to all children as well as one-time monetary support to newly married couples and new-born children and an increase in monthly allowances and pensions for mothers and the elderly. A free school meals programme for elementary schools has also been introduced.

Implementing all these quick-win initiatives is designed to enhance our efforts to reduce poverty and achieve the MDGs. Furthermore, as a practical follow-up to the 2005 World Summit, our parliament adopted earlier this year a comprehensive national development strategy, based on the MDGs and developed at the initiative of the President of Mongolia. This is an MDGs-plus development strategy that, once implemented, will transform Mongolia into a middle-income country by 2021.

In addition to its national efforts towards achieving the MDGs, Mongolia endeavours to contribute to international and regional advancement, especially in the area of promoting the interests of landlocked developing countries in addressing climate change issues. Last year, Mongolia hosted a meeting of trade ministers of landlocked developing countries and a thematic meeting of landlocked developing countries and their transit neighbours on trade and trade facilitation issues. These events set the priorities of the landlocked developing countries in the context of the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations and

contributed to the preparations of the upcoming mid-term review of the Almaty Programme of Action scheduled for early October this year. Mongolia is also proposing to host a North-East Asian summit on climate change early in 2009 as its contribution to MDG 7, on environmental sustainability at the subregional level.

In conclusion, may I join the call of the President of the General Assembly to make 2008 a year of action — action much more scaled up and reinvigorated — so that we will be able, by 2015, to fulfil our commitments on all the MDGs. Towards that end, we also support the President's proposal to annually organize a thematic debate on each and every individual MDG.

Mr. Muñoz (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for convening this important thematic debate on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Chile aligns itself with the statements made by the representative of Mexico on behalf of the Rio Group and by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

In 2000, at the Millennium Summit, we committed ourselves to obtaining certain objectives and goals by 2015; we called them the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In 2005, Chile submitted its first report on the status of its implementation of the Goals and, this year, in the framework of the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council, my country will make a voluntary national presentation on our recent progress.

Chile has met most of the established Goals and will redouble its efforts to meet all of them as soon as possible. Moreover, we have set even more ambitious goals for ourselves, as we are confident that we will be able to meet them. We have considerably increased our social expenditures, gearing our efforts towards developing human capital and improving the quality of basic services, particularly in the areas of health and housing.

This Assembly has now reached the midpoint between the promises made at the start of this millennium and the target date for fulfilling those promises. However, the reports that we have received on the global status of the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals raise concerns. True, progress has been made in certain regions, but that progress is not sufficient. The Secretary-General himself has indicated that unless urgent and coordinated action is taken, many millions of human beings will be left with the promises made by their governors and leaders in 2000 unfulfilled.

It is not too late to achieve the Goals that we set for ourselves for 2015, but we must redouble our efforts and be efficient in taking specific and coordinated steps. We do not need new commitments; we must keep the promises that we made.

Among the commitments assumed by the most developed economies was the allocation of 0.7 per cent of gross national product to official development assistance. Once again, from this podium, we insist that the key to achieving progress for our peoples, especially the poorest, lies in fulfilling what has already been promised. We trust that all the developed economies will fulfil that commitment as soon as possible.

Furthermore, we must make it clear that in the fight against hunger and poverty and in achieving the MDGs, it is the States that hold the primary responsibility. It is the Member States themselves that must redouble their efforts, seeking mechanisms that will enhance the efficiency of their use of resources; implementing appropriate public policies to effectively combat hunger and poverty and raise the standards for education and health; and eliminating any vestige of the wasteful use of resources, inefficiency and corruption.

Chile is a middle-income country that has witnessed significant development over the past few decades. That has allowed us to contribute in solidarity with less-developed countries, thus significantly enhancing South-South and triangular cooperation. We are also of the view that the search for innovative mechanisms for development financing is an effective tool for our peoples.

My country and other nations of varying levels of economic development have united their efforts to combat poverty and hunger through the initiative against poverty and hunger, showing that differences in the level of development between various countries do not pose any obstacle and that it is possible to move from words to action in relatively few months.

That mechanism has resulted in the establishment of the International Drug Purchase Facility — UNITAID. Chile has already provided more than $4 million, which is in keeping with the solidarity levy to which a number of countries have committed themselves and which in our country is equal to a levy of two dollars for every international flight that originates in our country. That contribution represents an unprecedented effort by Chile in the area of international assistance and cooperation. The money will mainly be used for the purchase of medication to combat HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria to assist especially children, primarily in Africa. Initiatives like that can be coordinated on the global level. All that is required is political resolve and strong solidarity.

Chile is always available to exchange and share good practices and initiatives with other nations. We are always ready to learn from those who are more knowledgeable and to cooperate with them in the areas of education and health and in the fight against hunger and poverty. We believe that mechanisms for the exchange of experiences are financially efficient, as they also allow us to achieve results more rapidly and they send a clear and strong message of solidarity.

Mr. Mubarak (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by thanking the President of the General Assembly for holding this thematic debate, which will help increase international awareness of the commitments made in the area of development. I would also like to underline my country's support for the statements made by the Permanent Representative of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on behalf of the African Group and, at the 88th meeting, by the representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Seven years have passed since the international community endorsed the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Those Goals should be reached by 2015, and we are at the halfway point on that road. It is of great concern that many developing — and especially least developed countries have been unable to make headway towards realizing those Goals. Furthermore, it is unlikely that they will achieve any tangible progress, given the diverse problems and difficulties they must contend with.

There is no doubt that developing countries are required to put in place national development strategies and mobilize their domestic resources to meet the targets set out within the framework of the MDGs. Although some countries have been able to make progress in that direction, many other countries, especially the least developed, still face various difficulties. They now face a growing gap between what is required and the capabilities that they have at their disposal. Despite their efforts, they do not have sufficient resources to implement their programmes to reduce poverty and hunger; combat increasing unemployment levels, increasing child and maternal mortality rates and the spread of deadly diseases, the most prominent being HIV/AIDS and malaria; confront the difficulty of achieving universal primary education; improve health and education services; and address challenges related to accessing energy and technology and capacity-building in various fields.

Acknowledgement by the international community of the right of peoples to development and the promises by partners to participate in the achievement of the MDGs have been insufficiently translated into concrete reality. Official development assistance (ODA) has decreased considerably. Many developed countries have not allocated the promised 0.7 per cent of their gross national product for ODA. Capital continues to flow from developing to developed countries. Income inequality between developing and developed countries continues to increase due to inequitable financial and trade systems that are skewed in favour of developed countries. Globalization has also exacerbated the marginalization of weak economies and exposed them to the risks of political and economic dependency.

The global partnership for development must be transformed into a tangible reality based on the commitments established in the Monterrey Consensus. In that regard, we stress the importance of increasing the levels and quality of ODA. Moreover, the international trade and financial system must be more focused on development.

The international community must demonstrate sincere political will to address special needs, in particular in Africa, without imposing impossible conditions. The international community must work with African countries to develop and implement development plans in various sectors. It must also work with African countries to create employment opportunities for the unemployed and must widen the scope of external debt relief. And it must promote

domestic and foreign investment in infrastructure and various areas of production.

Middle-income countries, especially those that rely on a single commodity for their income — which are consequently more at risk from price instability and economic crises, but for whom the Millennium Development Goals are nevertheless within reach — require sustained support for their development efforts. They should be encouraged to establish new mechanisms to underpin economic development, increase the effectiveness of social spending and improve health and education services. Middle-income countries must also be empowered so that they have access to development and capacity-building technology and expertise.

As far as Libya is concerned, studies undertaken to assess living standards reveal that there are no members of society for whom the terms "poor" or "hungry" are applicable. That is because Libya has adopted policies to subsidize basic food staples, therefore providing them at a price affordable to those on limited income. Addressing the needs of that segment of society is a strategic development priority in Libya.

The number of health clinics and educational institutions is constantly on the rise, as are efforts to improve the services they provide, which are free of charge. For example, the percentage of children under 15 years of age enrolled in primary and secondary education has increased to more than 98.5. Hospitals and health centres, which provide services free of charge, are being established in every part of the country.

Meanwhile, the restructuring of many sectors of the economy, along with the adoption of a new legal framework, has boosted economic performance. In addition, we are encouraging the establishment of shareholding companies and expanding the scope of economic activity and the provision of loans on favourable terms in order to accelerate economic development and provide employment opportunities to those who are in need.

Libya is eager to be a supportive partner to the least developed countries as they endeavour to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, especially as regards combating poverty and diseases. Libya has established the Qadhafi Strategic Project for Children, Young People and Women in Africa, which aims at helping to eliminate poverty, ignorance and disease in the continent and to alleviate the suffering of those sectors of society. We would like to emphasize the importance of providing support for the project so that it can achieve its ambitious goals more quickly.

In cooperation with Nigeria and Cuba, Libya is also implementing a South-South health-care project that provides a range of health services to those in need in a number of African countries.

Based on our belief in the policies of the African Union aimed at achieving economic integration between the countries of the continent, Libya is working to invest jointly with many African countries — especially sub-Saharan countries — in order to implement various agricultural projects. To that end, we have organized several meetings attended by African officials with expertise in that field. As a result, important outcomes and recommendations have been achieved that will help us to overcome many difficulties.

Libya is also playing a major role in the establishment and funding of financial institutions to bring together the countries of the Sahel and the Sahara in order to raise loans and fund manufacturing and service projects in many of the member States of those areas. We are also working to encourage Libyan investors to increase their production investment in the countries of Africa.

In conclusion, we would like to emphasize that the Millennium Development Goals — which have become a worldwide framework for development and a road to prosperity and stability for the peoples of the world and to the creation of a better world for all — will not be achieved without concerted international efforts and a commitment by all to stand by the promises they have made.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker for the thematic debate for this meeting. We will continue with the next plenary meeting immediately.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.